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AUG. 31 IS INTERNATIONAL OVERDOSE AWARENESS DAY

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Opioid overdoses are on the rise in Pinellas and around the nation. As these drugs affect individuals and communities, they can overwhelm health and law-enforcement networks. On Aug. 31, the Florida Department of Health in Pinellas County (DOH-Pinellas) will be joining community partners in marking [International Overdose Awareness Day](#).

This global event was designed to raise awareness of overdoses, end the stigma and acknowledge the grief accompanying the deaths and permanent injuries they cause families and communities. A social media campaign from Aug. 24-31 will share information and resources from community partners that include the [Drug-Free America Foundation](#) and DOH-Pinellas.

During 2015-2019, total accidental drug deaths in Pinellas County rose by 136%, with an increase from 256 to 423 during 2017-2019, according to the Pinellas Medical Examiner's Office. Emergency-room visits related to opioids rose by 261% from January 2018 to June 2020. Intravenous drug use (IDU) is also related to other infectious diseases.

"About 60% of chronic hepatitis cases are related to IDUs," said DOH-Pinellas Director Dr. Ulyee Choe. "In terms of HIV, 7% of newly diagnosed people 13 years of age and older had exposure to these drugs."

Raising awareness of drug abuse requires community partnerships and that led to the formation in 2017 of the Pinellas County Opioid Task Force, which brings together government, health, law enforcement and treatment entities together to combat the epidemic. The task [force's story map](#), contains data, videos and resources for the community and researchers to use. These include a map of overdose hot spots, an interactive map of opioid treatment centers and a resource list.

For more information about DOH-Pinellas, go to www.PinellasHealth.com or follow us on Twitter [@HealthyPinellas](https://twitter.com/HealthyPinellas).

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